

Stripcropping

Iowa Job Sheet



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Des Moines, Iowa

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What is stripcropping?

Stripcropping is a system of growing crops in approximately even width strips or bands on the contour to reduce soil erosion. The crops are arranged so that a strip of meadow or close growing crop is alternated with a strip of row crop.

How it helps the land

Stripcropping is very effective at reducing sheet and rill erosion. It can reduce soil loss as much as 75%, depending on the type of crop rotation and the steepness of a slope. Strips planted to meadow can provide food and cover for wildlife.

Where the practice applies

Stripcropping is a conservation option for any cropland where sheet and rill erosion are a problem. This practice is most effective on slopes of 2 to 12 percent but can reduce sheet and rill erosion on steeper slopes as well.

Where to get help

For assistance in planning and establishing your stripcropping system on your farm contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service office. For more job sheets and conservation information visit the NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



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Requirements of stripcropping

Here are the maximum strip widths and rotation to be used in your fields.

Field # (CTU) _____

Strip width _____

Rotation _____

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Rotation _____

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Strip width _____

Rotation _____

For crop rotations:

M=meadow

O=oats

C=corn

B=beans

Applying the practice

This practice is considered to be applied when the above strip widths are in place and the most conserving crop has been planted at least once in the field or conservation treatment unit (ctu).

Here are tips on planning your system:

- Estimate how many acres of each crop you want every year.
- Make sure your crop rotation allows for alternating row crops and close grown crops. Close growing crops include cereal grains, sudan grass as well as perennial grasses and legumes.
- Be sure herbicide carryover won't be a problem.
- Decide if you want to remove fences to get longer rows.
- You can do some planning by sketching out your strips on paper labeling the crop in each strip year by year for the next five to seven years.

Other considerations:

- On sloping ground it is important to plant field borders in places where there would normally be end rows running up and down hill. This reduces erosion that may occur in these areas and provides important travel lanes during haying or grain harvest.
- Strip widths may be adjusted downward to accommodate your equipment width for even rounds.
- Leave grass turnstrips where turns become sharp. Turn strips should be wide enough to make a turn with tractor and equipment.
- To be most effective, not more than half the field should be in row crop any one year. Strips of row crops must be alternated with strips of meadow or close grown crops. To balance the acres of crop production, the years in the crop rotation divided by 2 should equal the number of stripcropped fields or units. The fields or units should be as close to the same size as possible. Example: A corn, corn, oats, meadow, meadow, meadow, (CCOMMM) rotation would work best with three fields or units of equal size.
- Most contour stripcropped fields will have odd areas. Odd areas should be tilled and planted parallel to adjacent strips. This will help runoff water move slowly off the field. Odd areas can also be used for hay production or wildlife habitat.

Maintaining the practice

- Care should be taken to maintain strip widths. If meadow crops should fail or be winter killed, adjustments may be made to your rotation. Contact your NRCS office before making those changes.

- Use care in applying chemicals and in operating tillage equipment. With strips so close together, it's easy to affect an adjacent strip.
- Grassed waterways will need to be established and/or maintained. They are important for safe disposal of excess surface water. Lift tillage equipment and turn off spraying equipment when crossing waterways.

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